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AVOID WILD MUSHROOMS, STATE PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR WARNS

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SACRAMENTO – With seasonal rains promoting the growth of wild mushrooms, Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today reminded consumers that collecting and eating wild mushrooms can cause serious illness and even death.

"Because some poisonous mushrooms can look similar to non-poisonous mushrooms," Horton said, "wild mushrooms should not be eaten unless they have been carefully examined and determined edible by a mushroom expert."

In California, eating wild mushrooms has caused multiple illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths. According to the California Poison Control System, 894 cases of mushroom ingestion were reported statewide in 2008. Among those cases:

- 499 were children under six years of age and usually involved eating a small amount of a mushroom the child found growing in a backyard;
- 358 individuals were treated at a health care facility;
- 72 had a moderate health effect, such as diarrhea severe enough to require intravenous fluids;
- 17 were admitted to the intensive care unit;
- Five had a major health outcome, such as liver failure leading to coma, liver transplant or renal failure requiring dialysis;
- One died.

The deaths have been linked to the varieties *Amanita ocreata*, or "destroying angel," and *Amanita phalloides*, or "death cap." These mushrooms grow in some parts of California year-round, but are most commonly found during fall, late winter or spring.

Eating poisonous mushrooms can cause abdominal pain, cramping, vomiting, diarrhea, liver damage and death. With the deadly *Amanitas* mushrooms, abdominal symptoms are usually delayed eight to 12 hours so victims may not initially link their symptoms to eating wild mushrooms. Individuals who develop any of these symptoms after eating wild mushrooms should seek medical attention. Individuals with symptoms, or their treating health care providers, should immediately contact Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

CDPH is collaborating with Poison Control and the Mycological Society of San Francisco (MSSF) to establish statewide procedures and to designate experts for identifying wild mushrooms involved in poisonings.